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An extensible file access method for accessing a first foreign file system from a data processing system with a first native file system, said first foreign file system and said first native file system implementing different file system protocols. The foreign file system is accessed by issuing a request according to the native file system protocol for data stored in the foreign file system; translating the native file system request to an intermediate programming interface, wherein the intermediate programming interface is different from both the native file system protocol and the foreign file system protocol; translating the intermediate file system request to the foreign file system protocol; and returning to the client a response from the foreign file system responsive to the translated request. Multiple foreign file systems may be supported by determining a second foreign file system protocol and by providing a translation from the intermediate programming interface to the second foreign file system protocol. Also, multiple native file systems may be supported by determining a second native file system protocol and by providing a translation from the second native file system protocol to the intermediate programming interface. The intermediate programming interface comprises a set of generic access functions common to the native file system protocol and the foreign file system protocol and a set of file system specific functions which are not common to the file system protocols. The set of generic access functions common to the native file system protocol and the foreign file system protocol are translated from the native file system protocol to the intermediate programming interface which is then translated to the foreign file system protocol, and the set of file system specific functions which are not common to the file system protocols are not translated from the native file system protocol to the intermediate programming interface.